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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, CONSTITUTION; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: Discussion on the Constitution was the major editorial theme of the daily newspapers on August 25, 2005. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES  
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[1A. "Committed Period"](#)  
(Al-Bayyan published in Arabic a page four editorial about the constitution by Zainab Al-Khafaji)

"The National Dialogue Council's position opposing concerning the draft constitution may prevent it from wide participation in the constitutional process. Initially the draft of the constitution was drawn up following an accord that was reached by the majority of Iraqi political parties that ostensibly represent the people. Therefore, these discussions cannot be described as based on ethnic power sharing because discussions on the constitution led to an agreement amongst politicians. The recent dispute on pending issues does not represent a refusal of the draft constitution but it is a good chance for political parties and blocs to end their disagreements. I think that these disagreements are insignificant if we compare them to the issue of the Ba'ath Party's destiny in Iraq and the distribution of powers. The National Dialogue Council must understand that it has to reconsider its attitude especially after the Kurdish coalition and the United Iraqi Alliance agreed to postpone ratification of the constitution in order to grant them more time to settle pending issues. Prime Minister Ibrahim Al-Ja'afari said that this resolution is necessary and that every thing must be resolved within three days because the current period is a decisive and sensitive one. Otherwise, the National Dialogue Council will squander a big opportunity to actively participate in the upcoming constitutional process."

[1B. "The Overwhelming Majority"](#)  
(Al-Fourat published in Arabic a page-two editorial by Majed Fadhel Al-Zaboon on the referendum)

"The technical process for the upcoming referendum still remains unclear. The majority of Iraqis say they are unaware of the voting procedures, which is the responsibility of the Iraqi electoral commission!....Some of the voters think that the electoral process involves a simple 'yes' or 'no' on the draft constitution; such a procedure would deprive Iraqis the right to explain their opinions about good and bad principles and the basics of the draft constitution. The Iraqi electoral commission should not render the referendum process a generic one because Iraqis must express private opinions about their new constitution. If this process is difficult to achieve, the referendum process should include disagreement points, this is the way our new constitution will gain legitimacy. An accepted compromise to satisfy all Iraqi sects should be designed to enable us to rebuild and to succeed in our political and democratic process without any marginalization or neglect for any Iraqi sects. This will be the way we can reach our national compact and independence and force the occupation forces to leave our country. The upcoming constitutional referendum should include all Iraqi sects (specifically the opposition) because some of the constitution articles should be removed and others affirmed. The majority of Iraqis should decide to accept the draft constitution, not the minority. And everyone must participate in the upcoming referendum process to decide for Iraq."

[1C. "A Kurdish Vision for the Iraqi Constitution"](#)

(Al-Taakhi published a front-page editorial in Arabic by its Editor-in-Chief, Badr Khan Al-Sindi on Kurdish views of the constitution)

"The Kurdish Parliament has approved and supported the draft constitution. President Barazani said that this draft is a great achievement (especially during this period) despite the inclusion of some items that do not coincide with Kurdish ambitions. Kurdish support comes as a reply to those who want to blame the Kurds for attempting to obstruct the genesis of the Iraqi constitution. For the second time, the Kurds have proved that they are committed to the main principles, which were agreed upon with various political parties at points earlier. The Kurds want to make this constitution successful and they've placed emphasis on the principles of reconciliation and the wide participation of all Iraqi sects. However, we must not cede our legitimate national interests, ambitions, and right to decide our destiny. We think that the current draft constitution will strengthen the federalist experiment in Iraq in a way that reinforces unity without the marginalization of any other sect. This is a new Iraq, which must be based on equal distribution of resources apart from the control of the central government that devastated the country. We do not think that the current constitution satisfies Kurdish desires. However, we see that there are some chauvinistic and dictatorial mentalities trying to impart the constitution with tyrannical ideals. Everyone must understand that Iraq is moving forward and the federal solution is the best way to solve all problems. As we approach the referendum, we hope that Iraq will enjoy peace, economic prosperity, and deep democratic awareness. We hope this awareness will not surprise Iraqis one day when they hear that the Kurds want to decide their own destiny."

**E. "Devils of the Constitution"**  
(Az-Zaman published in Arabic a page six editorial by Jihad Zayyer about the constitution)

"Today Iraqi politicians, most of whom lack real political professionalism and sufficient experience, will discuss the draft constitution in the national assembly. At the same time, Iraqis will, and perhaps negatively, deal with the items of this constitution because they want to know the results of politicians' disagreements over pending issues. Iraqis have the right to know the details and implications of the constitution's articles, which will govern their lives. We know that the majority of Iraqis, who for instance harbor anti-federalist attitudes, lack information on governmental structure especially in countries that have ethnic diversity. Hence, they have the right to be suspicious of current Iraqi politicians because they do not know what the Iraqi people need. Current political parties are still distant from the people and these parties are ignorant about people's intentions and orientations. Current Iraqi politicians speak about federalism, the role of religion in government, and the equitable distribution of natural resources. On the other hand, the government's offices are filled with corruption. These politicians want to occupy Iraqi minds with complicated political concepts. But, how can a nation that was marginalized from real political participation understand concepts that may contain devils and disasters? Modern concepts and the sound policies of politicians alone cannot help Iraqis reveal the true intentions of these politicians."

**F. "The Favorable Disagreement"**  
(Ad-Dustoor published in Arabic a front-page editorial by Bassem Al-Sheikh about the Sunni rejection of the constitution)

"The Sunni rejection of the draft constitution submitted to the national assembly is a healthy reaction; they initiated publicity campaigns to encourage 'no votes' in the upcoming referendum. Disagreements and different points of view are normal in life and dealing with such issues should be done in a civilized way; democracy means different points of view and more importantly how much influence one can wield. Therefore, the responsibility of those who reject the constitution is to create an influential opposition and enough supporters to back that opinion and then to have the influence to change and rule the political process. The technical processes are good because it keeps the process within the safety margins; public oversights, international political scrutiny, and the media have all witnessed the birth of the new constitution. Now parliamentary members have legitimate authority to discuss every single article in the constitution. They will not permit a premature constitution to pass and even if they did, the majority of Iraqis will say no in the upcoming referendum. This is the Iraqi will and public influence in the democratic process. The Sunni powers which are protesting through conservatives on the draft constitution committee decided that the upcoming referendum will be their way to say no to a constitution that does not include all their rights and demands."

**G. "Money, Power, and the Constitution"**

(Asharq al-Awsat published in Arabic a page nine column by Abdul Rahman Al-Rashed about the Iraqi constitution)  
"There are several points of the disagreements inside the TNA that postponed the agreement on the constitution. Sunnis made a mistake last year by boycotting the election and are paying for it now. Realizing the scope of this mistake, suddenly their leaders are now calling for participation in the political process. Today, the Shiites and the Kurds would be making a grave mistake if they did not grant the Sunnis guarantees in the constitution. Without the Sunnis, the large, powerful state of Iraq will turn into a number of weak small states. It is surprising that the constitutional disagreement has become Shiite-Sunnis or Arab-Kurds. The deepest disagreements are within each team, not among teams. The real disagreement is between the Islamists and the secularists, within both Sunni and Shiite communities. It will deepen in the future, because the constitution is not dealing with the fundamental issues."

1G. "Who Wants to Divide Iraq?"  
(Al-Adala published in Arabic a page five editorial by Zuhair Al-Baghdadi on federalism)

"No one has the right to accuse any Iraqi of not being patriotic, because each one of us has his own position about the correct path toward a new nation. We are Iraqis before anything else. The argument now is about federalism and its implementation in the new Iraq. On one side, they believe that federalism means the division of Iraq into small separated states, weak and easily swallowed by neighboring countries. As such, it is bad and all Iraqis must reject it. On the other hand, there are those who believe that it will not result in weakness and division, Iraq will become like other federal countries that have one border, one constitution, one flag and one identity. The people will determine whether accept it or not, they will express their opinion through the referendum on the constitution. People, not political factions will determine our destiny. Let us stop talking under a particular sect or nationality, we are all Iraqis. Some say that the Kurds should have the right to implement the federalism, but that the Arabs in the southern or the central areas should not, claiming that Iran or the Gulf States will interfere. This is unacceptable. One can not claim the right of federalism for one part of Iraq and not accept it for another. Federalism is the fair distribution of resources, it will speed up the reconstruction, and create job opportunities. Furthermore, it will establish security and stability, by granting greater authority for the districts and provinces."

Khalilzad